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Centre-Periphery Agency Dynamics During Linguistic Imperialism: An Investigation of Korean Perspectives

Michael D. Smith
Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan

This study critically examines the sociolinguistic positionality of the English language, as situated within the Republic of Korea, employing features of Robert Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism framework. Specifically, the primary investigatory aim of this inquiry is an exploration of local stakeholder perceptions concerning Centre–Periphery agency dynamics during Korean EFL adoption. In addition to the work of Phillipson, the secondary research presented here is grounded heavily in locally produced literature, thereby enabling an analysis that is appreciative of Korean scholarly representation. In doing so, this study intends to answer calls by various Periphery academics for comprehension of nonnative perspectives with reference to the societal impact of global English on distinct language learning milieus. Through a close examination of the conditions presented here, it is determined that local EFL users have recognized English in Korea as being hierarchically rationalized by local elites as necessary to the maintenance of Korean national and transnational advancement. Subsequently, Phillipson's description of English language internalization via ideological mechanisms is shown to be accurate; moreover, on this occasion, directional causality toward Korea-intrinsic EFL hegemony has been established. Nevertheless, it is determined that theories of Western-driven linguistic imperialism fail to account fully for the functional validity of English language dominance in this context, given the absence of stakeholder recognition for Western agency during these processes.

Keywords: linguistic imperialism, post-colonial criticism, World Englishes, sociolinguistics, cultural hegemony

BACKGROUND

Due in part to the marked history of Anglo-American imperialism, the impact of the English language on nonnative-speaking locales has developed into an integral component of a complex sociolinguistic discussion, with various academics (Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999) describing the transnational positionality and influence of English as being far from accidental. In particular, concerns regarding the discriminatory sociolinguistic context of global English motivated Robert Phillipson to produce perhaps the most influential critique of the language's international impact, *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), which presents a multifaceted descriptive model for the status of English within diverse cultural settings. Specifically, Phillipson (1992) describes linguistic imperialism as "the dominance of English asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (p. 47).

Phillipson characterizes linguistic imperialism as a ubiquitous threat to nonnative cultures, exemplified by the historical spread and continued dominance of global English. Accordingly, the English "product" is positioned as the nucleus of a sociopolitical system of empire that serves to strengthen the neo-imperialistic interests of "Centrist"[1] (principally, a UK—US inner circle axis) and "Periphery" elites at the expense of the majority of those contained within the dominated Periphery (Phillipson, 1992, pp. 51—52). Specifically, Centrist governments and organizations are described as projecting, both directly and indirectly, economic and cultural authority over outer- and expanding-circle territories. This perpetuates Western-centric agendas and facilitates the dominance of "inner-circle English" within a host of Periphery settings.

The international transmission of English may be viewed as a demonstration of imperialism in contexts where the functional and symbolic prepotency of English is developed and reinforced at the expense of indigenous cultures, due to its role as the international gatekeeper to education, employment, finance, and social mobility (Ferguson, 2006). The apportionment of agency in Periphery adoption of English language learning (ELL) — and, as a consequence, sociolinguistic hierarchy — is thus central to Phillipson's thesis. Specifically, Phillipson (2011, pp. 2—3) views the agency dynamics of linguistic imperialism as

embodying the patterns described in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Agency Features of Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson, 2011)

Pattern of Activity
• It is ideological: beliefs, attitudes, and imagery glorify the dominant language, stigmatize others, and rationalize the linguistic hierarchy.
• The dominance is hegemonic; it is internalized and naturalized as being "normal."
• Linguistic imperialism interlocks with a structure of imperialism in culture, education, the media, communication, the economy, politics, and military activities.

Phillipson (2008a) defines English not as a benign contact language, but an embodiment of the "Anglo-American civilizing mission of the 20th century" (p. 263): a meticulously prepared product that serves to strengthen the disproportionate nature of Centre–Periphery cultural transmission and substantiate English's position at the apex of a distinct linguistic hierarchy (Phillipson, 2008a). Crucially, global English is identified as supporting Western neocolonial interests by interlocking with asymmetrical systems of economy and power. This is ideologically supported and legitimized by both partisan native speakers and Periphery users via the latter's sustained consumption and reproduction of Western cultural items. In facilitating this process, globalized Periphery elites are interpreted as assuming the role of *society-specific* Centres, leading Phillipson (1992) to posit that English language hegemony is an invariably inner-circle-originating, yet outwardly radiating, mechanism. It is argued, therefore, that the spread of global English has generated a new order of socioeconomic hierarchization within Periphery locales (Tollefson, 2000). Consequently, an awareness of this process is crucial to the comprehension of Phillipson's narrative regarding EFL agency.

Specifically, Philipson (2011) applies Skutnabb-Kangas' (1988) concept of *linguicism*[2] to describe the methods by which English has been exploited by the (both indigenous and non-indigenous) Centre to perpetuate discriminatory practices between native and nonnative speakers in intercultural settings, and between users and non-users of English within the Periphery. This frame of analysis draws on the writings of Johan Galtung (1971), specifically his theories regarding the structures of imperialism, and the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci's (1992) concept of cultural hegemony. In adopting Gatlung's

model, Phillipson highlights English as the principal transmitter of a cross-cultural inequity that encompasses linguistic, social, economic, political, and military features. Gramsci's premise, meanwhile, is notable in its description of the process by which Centrist elites manufacture "consent" within the Periphery, achieving subjugation by ideological mechanisms.

The portrayal of English language spread as a Western-transmitted tool of subjugation has provoked intense reactions from a host of scholars, facilitating an extensive discussion regarding the respective merits and limitations of Phillipson's framework. Nevertheless, due to limitations of space, it is not the intention to provide a comprehensive analysis of Linguistic Imperialism Theory. Rather, this inquiry proposes an examination of stakeholder conceptualizations of Centre–Periphery agentive dynamics during the adoption of English as a foreign language (EFL). Specifically, the circumstances relating to English appropriation within the Republic of Korea (henceforth, Korea) will be evaluated in an effort to contribute a deeper and more critical understanding of the impact of global English.

The environment that surrounds ELL within Korea has changed dramatically in the wake of globalization. While English is neither a designated official language nor critical to the institutional purposes of government, its acquisition has emerged as an integral component of the nation's financial and educational policies, becoming institutionalized on the basis of Korea's rapid development and insertion into the global community. Korea, therefore, is primed for linguistic research that communicates the contextual factors relevant to its locale.

Fundamental to this study is the perception of *stakeholders* concerning the hegemonic structuring of the English language within Korea. Accordingly, a large body of locally produced sociolinguistic research will be consulted, thereby providing this investigation with scholarly representations of ELL conditions that are appreciative of local interests. Collected literature will, in conjunction with Phillipson's (2011) framework, inform the analysis of Korean EFL learner observations toward local English appropriation dynamics. As such, the primary objective of this study is to directly examine the conceptualization of *agency*, specifically with regard to the perceptions of Koreans toward the projection of Western authority and the role of Centrist elites in the hegemonic and ideological construction of Korea's "English fever." It is anticipated that findings will aid in the understanding of local

conceptualizations of causal dynamics with regards to linguistic imperialism, thus satisfying Canagarajah's (1999) demand for comprehension of Periphery perspectives with reference to the societal impact of global English on specific locales.

As noted by Pennycook (1999), the role of English within complex post-colonial settings must be assessed on an individual basis, with macro-level theories regarding Centrist domination via language transmission ultimately proving reductive to the comprehensive understanding of distinct language learning milieus. It is thus crucial that any exploration into linguistic imperialism employ an authentic, non-presumptive policy when preparing, implementing, and analyzing its research methodology. By applying a wide body of locally produced literature to inform the analysis of Korean EFL learner observations, it is anticipated that context-specific dynamics pertaining to the use of English within Korea will be identified, allowing this inquiry to compare its findings to the agentive features of the linguistic imperialism model, and endorse or challenge theoretical assumptions where necessary.

The "Agency" Response

Responses to Linguistic Imperialism Theory, including those by Davies (1996) and Brutt-Griffler (2009), have routinely taken issue with a number of linguistic imperialism's underlying theoretical assumptions. Notably, Brutt-Griffler (2002) takes semantic issue with Phillipson's use of *imperialism* when describing the spread of English as a direct product of a Centre–Periphery hegemonic transmission, given that Phillipson (1992) asserts "in present-day neo-colonialism, the elites are to a large extent indigenous" (p. 52) and that "the demand for English is articulated by leaders in all parts of the world" (p. 9). Etymologically speaking, imperialism is commonly recognized as the advocacy of empire or, as described by Duiker and Spielvogel (2015), "the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries" (p. 610). If the agency for English language adoption and, by association, sociolinguistic inequality, lies primarily within the periphery; however, then the precedent that would constitute imperialism is not achieved, potentially shifting focus from the legitimate source of discrimination.

Several scholars originating from post-colonial settings have articulated that it is a misinterpretation of the contextual factors

surrounding ELL that represents Phillipson's major fallacy, however. In particular, Joseph Bisong (1995) has argued that Linguistic Imperialism Theory assumes what it sets out to prove, thereby exemplifying a self-fulfilling prophecy. Specifically, Bisong (1995) takes umbrage with Phillipson's (1992) dominant–dominated dichotomous account of Periphery ELL participation, maintaining that "to interpret such actions as emanating from people who are victims of Centre linguistic imperialism is to bend sociolinguistic evidence to suit a preconceived thesis" (p. 125). It may thus be argued (Davies, 1996) that Linguistic Imperialism Theory is patronizing towards Periphery policymakers and English language users – regarding them as powerless to oppose Centre-driven hegemony and, by association, incapable of independent agency.

Furthermore, Canagarajah (1999) notes that the detached nature of linguistic imperialism's macro-level analytical model impedes it from examining the many complex issues associated with English use within Periphery communities: "In considering how social, economic, governmental, and cultural institutions effect inequality, Phillipson's perspective becomes rather too impersonal and global. What is sorely missed is the individual, the particular" (p. 41). Canagarajah's observation, like those of Bisong before him, highlights two prominent fallacies of the imperialism position: an overgeneralization of the complex realities associated with authentic language learning conditions, and, significantly, a lack of consideration for the Periphery language learner's agency in acquiring English.

English Language Policy in a Globalized Korea

The expansion of English language education within contemporary Korea is bound inextricably to an acute period of internationalization, beginning in the late 20th century, and must be understood in terms of this wider narrative. Notably, it was at this time that English language teaching (ELT) began to be recognized as a significant component of Korean globalization discourse, typified by President Kim Young-sam's (Kim YS) 1994 *segyehwa* (literally, "globalization") initiative, which attempted a comprehensive, top–down reform of the Korean political, cultural, and social economies (Kim, 2000; Shin, 2010). This specifically targeted the internationalization of foreign language education in an effort to transition Korea toward a human resources-orientated economy

(Shin, 2010).

Accordingly, the Sixth National Curriculum was developed and implemented throughout 1995 and 1996, placing a clear emphasis on English proficiency via progressive interventions, including communicative language learning (Jeon, 2009). Korea's *segyehwa* drive was augmented further under Kim's successor, Kim Dae-jung (Kim DJ), who, as described by Kim (2000), "forcefully embraced the core concepts of globalization like no other" (p. 84). Specifically, Song (2011a) notes that Kim DJ accelerated the globalized, neoliberal educational policies initiated by his predecessor by implementing further reforms based on philosophies that promoted the image of Koreans as global citizens as evidenced in the ELL principles of the Seventh National Curriculum, introduced by the Korean Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation in 2000, and presented here as Table 2 (as cited in Chang, 2009, p. 88).

TABLE 2. ELL Principles of the Korean Seventh National Curriculum

Language Learning Principle
• English education for focusing on student-centeredness.
• English education for cultivating communicative competence.
• English education for utilizing various activities and tasks.
• English education for fostering logical and creative thinking.
• English education for functioning effectively as a nation in an era of globalization.

As observed by Chang (2009), the Seventh National Curriculum conclusively emphasizes the Korean Government's agency in the enhancement of ELL: "If Korea is to function effectively as a nation in the era of globalization, then Korean people must be able to communicate effectively in English" (p. 94). Subsequently, the Korean public has come to acknowledge the transnational status of English and, crucially, observe English language competence as representing significant capital on both cultural and symbolic levels (Shin, 2007).

The positionality of English as a symbol of Korean progression was enriched further in the mid-2000s during the presidency of Lee Myung-bak. Prior to assuming office, Lee communicated his ambition to reform public ELT by implementing an "English Education Roadmap" (Lee, 2010, p. 247). In what proved to be a controversial maneuver, Lee's proposal recommended that all classes nationwide be taught

exclusively in English, with the then government-elect abandoning its strategy within five days after critics rigorously challenged its viability. Nevertheless, Lee's corresponding rhetoric explicitly identified English language attainment as a means of maintaining Korea's competitive edge within an increasingly integrated international community, notably describing the global landscape as a "battlefield" and English as "a key weapon for survival" without which Korea would falter (as cited in Lee, Han, & McKerrow, 2010, p. 338).

The pervasiveness of English acquisition within Korea may thus be viewed through the East Asian Social Darwinist lens of a systematic civic obligation, rather than an independent determination. While Western Social Darwinism facilitated the rationalization and justification of imperialist expansionism by way of "civilizing missions," its East Asian equivalent "not only offered a conceptual framework to explain current national inequalities, but also worked to guide East Asian responses to the aggressive civilizing efforts of the West" (Shin, 2006, pp. 28–29). Subsequently, East Asian Social Darwinism promulgates the notion that a state must first develop national power if its populace is to achieve individual enlightenment (Park, 2005). Shin (2010), therefore, describes the post-globalization ELT policies of the Kim YS, Kim DJ, and Lee governments as reflecting the aspiration of strengthening Korea's international standing and economic competitiveness via the enhancement of local English comprehension levels.

In particular, Lee's strand of fervent discourse unmistakably served to embed a now pervasive ideology, one that emphasizes the necessity for English acquisition if Koreans are to strengthen the nation and, crucially, assume the role of productive and patriotic citizens. Proponents of Linguistic Imperialism Theory may recognize the process of empowerment via the mastery of Western tools as a form of self-perpetuating enslavement (Smith & Kim, 2015, p. 341). Regardless of interpretation, however, it is apparent that the ELT initiatives of multiple Korean Governments have played substantial roles in the circulation of ideologies that serve to strengthen the hegemonic and symbolic capital of English. Local academics (Lee, 2010; Shin, 2010) have subsequently conceptualized Korea's "English fever" as being manufactured and institutionalized by local elites in an effort to maintain a discernibly circular system of power. Specifically, Song (2011b) details the process by which English has been enlisted to reproduce and rationalize Korea's established social hierarchy:

> English has been recruited, in the guise of globalization, to exploit the meretricious ideology of merit to the advantage of the privileged classes and the disadvantage of the other classes of the society. English in South Korea cannot be understood fully unless it is recognized that its importance has not been as much engendered by globalization, as it has been resorted to as a subterfuge to conceal where the responsibility for inequality in education lies within the society. (p. 35)

While Song unmistakably apportions agency for educational inequality to the established Korean social order, the final sentence of this passage is undoubtedly the most telling. The author describes the process by which the agency behind Korean ELL has been externalized, drawing attention away from the "privileged classes and politicians who fail or refuse to recognize South Korea's obsession with English" (Song, 2011b, p. 50) and toward globalization. Interestingly, Song (2011b) also describes how, in the centuries preceding Korean transnationalism, the agency for local socio-educational inequality was typically regarded as domestic. The Korean *yangban* (literally, "two groups") system of governance, for instance, can trace its origins to the tenth century (Oh, 1999).

Members of feudal Korea's elite caste were expected to typify the neo-Confucian ideal of the learned gentleman, attaining their positions through a rigorous merit system of state examinations. Crucially, however, admittance into the Joseon aristocracy − and thus, elite education − was highly restricted, with "yangban" typically signifying a status designation for members of Korea's powerful ruling families (Palais, 2014), who sustained their rule via the slave labor of the proletariat. Ultimately, the *yangban* system "negated important aspects of open competition and social mobility based on merit, making the system of recruiting government officials increasingly more arbitrary, manipulative, ascriptive, and corrupt" (Oh, 1999, p. 10).

Korea's established history of economically driven academic discrimination is significant when evaluating the nation's current condition. Considering the visible association between economy and education that exists throughout the globe, it is hardly unexpected to discover that ELL has emerged as a significant predictor of Korean socioeconomic status. By way of illustration, an investigation by Kim (2012) found that "seventy percent of students from families earning 5

million won or more a month received private English education in 2010, fully 3.5 times the 20% from those earning less than 1 million won" (p. 3).

In this manner, local academics (Shin, 2010; Song, 2011b) have recognized restricted access to desirable forms of education and employment as transferring away from the isolationist *yangban* class and toward a newly emergent caste of internationalized Korean capitalists. Smith and Kim (2015), for instance, note that "if English is the key to gaining well-paid employment [in Korea], it is predominantly graduates from privileged backgrounds who possess the ability to unlock those doors" (p. 342). Consequently, the ideological refocusing of educational prestige toward ELL − and emergence of "English Fever" − is visibly consistent with Phillipson's (2011) Neo-Gramscian description of elite-driven cultural hegemony.

Considering the restrictive nature of Korea's "education fever" (Lee, 2010, p. 253; Shin, 2010, p. 58; Song, 2011b, p. 49) predates the importation of the English language by centuries, one could recognize socially driven educational inequality as historically and culturally ingrained within Korea. In rebutting the agency response to Linguistic Imperialism Theory, Phillipson (2008b) has argued that "individual agency and decision-making reflect a range of [often externally generated] societal forces and ideologies" (p. 34). While this assertion is certainly accurate, perhaps no influence is as integral to individual agency as a millennium of cultural development and conditioning.

METHOD

Participants and Ethical Considerations

All 50 primary research participants were 21−23-year-old, tertiary-level EFL learners, categorized as possessing either a "near-native" or "advanced" level of English language communicative competence, as described by the Test of English Proficiency (TEPS)[3] scoring system (Park, 2011). Despite the uniformly high standard of English comprehension, it was decided that research questions would be presented in both the Korean and English languages in an effort to aid participant understanding. Before initiating data collection, both verbal

approval and formal permission to conduct research were obtained from the stakeholders' place of learning. Furthermore, all potential participants received full disclosure, outlining the scope of inquiry; the handling of all submitted data; and the rights of confidentiality, refusal, and the withholding of responses to any given question.

Those who agreed to participate in the study were then instructed to read and complete ethical consent forms, as per standard ethical guidelines. Notwithstanding these measures, it must be conceded that the data collection format employed during primary research presented one major ethical limitation: namely, the present researcher is also an English language lecturer employed at the university in which the learners were enrolled at the time of questioning. In accordance with the principles of ethical beneficence (Bates, 2004), each subject received both written and verbal assurances that the current study remained unconnected from their ongoing education and that non-participation or any and all tendered responses would have no bearing on their future learning.

Research Instrument

This inquiry employed a concurrent mixed-methods questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The research device was organized into three statements, with each representing a particular pattern of Phillipson's (2011) description of agency dynamics during linguistic imperialism. The quantitative data collection method employed during primary measures consisted of a 5-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932), used to quantify the strength of stakeholder agreement toward each specific pattern of imperialistic activity. This procedure allowed the inquiry to capitalize on both cognitive and affective attitudinal components, represented by a linear, pre-coded continuum, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Nevertheless, considering the primary aim of this study, it was necessary that the qualitative analysis phase be the central focus of this investigation. In an effort to present a concise range of local perspectives, ten volunteers were presented with a simple text box and instructed to expand upon their questionnaire feedback by communicating their personal experiences dynamically, as situated and embedded within local contexts. It is hoped, therefore, that the amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies will enhance the intelligibility, corroborative, and narrative capacities of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ideological Forces Drive English Language Adoption

While Tollefson (2007) notes that "ideology" may be used to characterize an array of potentially disparate ELT concepts, he broadly defines the term as "the implicit, usually unconscious assumptions about language and language behavior that fundamentally determine how human beings interpret events" (p. 26). Particularly significant to Phillipson's (1992) narrative is the legitimization and rationalization of English language dominance, which is imposed and maintained by Centre and Periphery elites via its sustained glorification. As represented by Figure 1, overall agreement accounted for 64% of all responses, indicating that the majority of stakeholders recognize pro-ELL ideologies as affecting Korea. Moreover, neutral responses represented 20% of attained feedback, while 16% of stakeholders disagreed with Statement 1. Subsequently, the qualitative responses contained within Table 3 present several noticeable patterns which act to clarify the respective positions of interviewees.

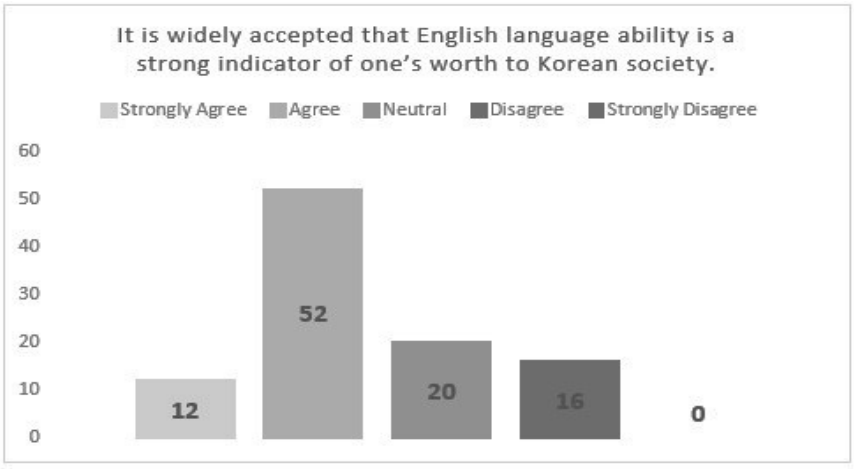

FIGURE 1. Level of Stakeholder Agreement to Statement 1.

Interestingly, responses 1–4 draw attention to the subject of standardized language testing, interpreting a direct association between

demonstrable English comprehension levels and social worth. Most notably, response 2 describes the perceived transformative effect of language accreditation, perhaps revealing the presence of linguicism within Korean ELL dynamics. Response 5, meanwhile, notes the influence of both the Korean Government and globalization on local language learning agency, describing the former as the principal champion of EFL education. Responses 1–5 correspond unmistakably with Phillipson's (2011) description of language assessment as a form of linguistic commodification. However, while Phillipson identifies this process as predominantly Centre-driven, it should be noted that both the TOEIC[4] and TEPS methods of evaluation are Periphery-derived, originating from Japan and Korea, respectively. At this point, such recognition may suggest that Phillipson's Neo-Gramscian depiction of sociolinguistic inequality as a product of capitalist-driven hegemonic processes possesses credence.

TABLE 3. Qualitative Responses to Statement 1

Response Number	Strength of Agreement	Stakeholder Response
1.	Agree	"English licenses, such as TOEIC and TEPS, and their associated grades, are some of the strongest indicators."
2.	Strongly Agree	"High scores in TOEIC, TEPS, etc. are really important in this society. They can make normal people into very talented people, especially when getting a job or going to university. English is a very useful tool."
3.	Agree	"When getting a job, there are requirements for English, like TOEIC. So English ability is one's worth."
4.	Agree	"Yes, people often ask about another's TOEIC/TEPS score."
5.	Neutral	"Because the Korean Government wants Korea to be a globalized nation, they tell Koreans that they should learn English."
6.	Agree	"English language ability is now a must."
7.	Strongly Agree	"Yes, Korean society thinks that English is very important when judging people."
8.	Agree	"Agree. Learning English is an important factor for Koreans, so English is an indicator of one's worth."
9.	Disagree	"One ability does not equal worth."
10.	Disagree	"English is an indicator of one's ability to learn, but it is not used when people judge one's worth."

Local academics (Kim, 2000; Lee, 2011) have noted that government-driven narratives achieve this process by advocating English as a resource in the enhancement of both individual and societal progression, which, Phillipson (2011) asserts, "leads to English being perceived as prestigious and 'normal' ... [resulting in the belief that] the language is universally relevant and usable, and the need for others to learn and use it" (p. 459). By way of illustration, Presidents Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung's reorganization of the Korean ELL environment presented English comprehension as a fundamental component of Korean global development and modernity. Additionally, President Lee Myung-bak's symbolic representations of English as a "weapon" and globalization as a "battlefield" (as cited in Lee, Han, & McKerrow, 2010, p. 338) visibly manipulate the Social Darwinist convention of "survival of the fittest" to sustain pro-ELL ideologies (Lee, Han, & McKerrow, 2010, p. 342).

As a result of this process, English language ideologies remain uncontested and are subsequently recycled by the general population. Response 6, for example, describes English comprehension as a "must." This fixation is represented further by responses 7 and 8, which present a direct ideological link between the linguistic and social capitals by describing the "importance" of English proficiency when assessing an individual's societal value. Subsequently, it is evident that responses 1-8 endorse Phillipson's (2011) affirmation that linguistic imperialism is supported ideologically by the societal consumption and reproduction of political, economic, and educational discourses. Conflictingly, however, responses 9 and 10 present a somewhat pragmatic view, interpreting English as an individual *ability* that should remain disassociated from one's social worth.

Ultimately, the emergence and continued transmission of *segyehwa* discourse have been recognized by Korean academics (Jeon, 2009; Song, 2011b) as the primary influence in imparting, from the institutional level to the public, the ideological value of English language adoption. Specifically, Lee (2011) observes that "English language ideology in contemporary South Korea is closely related to the concept of globalization" (p. 124), with post-*segyehwa* ELL framed typically as a means of enacting a new "cosmopolitan" Korean national identity (Kim, 2000, p. 244) and a critical resource in the maintenance and enhancement of both national competitiveness and global exposure (Kim, 2000; Shin, 2010). Subsequently, it is apparent that Koreans are

compelled to learn English as a means of furthering national objectives. It could be argued, therefore, that many Korean EFL learners do not opt freely to participate in ELL.

English Language Dominance Is Hegemonically Structured

Phillipson identifies hegemonic dominance via the dissemination (and internalization) of pro-ELL ideologies as featuring significantly in the examinations of structural inequality and the tiers of social hierarchy to which English either provides or withholds access (i.e., linguicism). Consequently, Phillipson (1992) describes ELL norms as being "dictated by the dominant Centre and internalized by those in power in the Periphery" (p. 52). As a result, English language hegemony involves a two-stage process, with local elites gradually assuming the role of the "Centre" due to the shared interests of the two groups. Hegemony may then be achieved by the social manipulation of affected settings, specifically by imposing self-aggrandizing sociolinguistic practices and ideologies until they are ultimately "normalized" by the dominated. In this manner, hegemony "is invariably viewed as non-coercive, involving contestation and adaptation [and] a battle for hearts and minds" (Phillipson, 1997, p. 242) – as illustrated in the previous section. In the case of Korea, Shim (2010) and Song (2011b) interpret the appropriation and promotion of English as a vehicle for local capitalist elites to achieve both individual and national advancement.

Specifically, Song (2011b) views the purpose of local ELL to be a vehicle for the enhancement of "not the new social order, engendered by globalization, but the established social order, [which is] protected and reproduced through the medium of English education" (p. 37), which, Song (2011b) contends, allows "the haves of South Korea ... to hide their agendas and interests behind the façade of the globalizing world, away from the gaze of the have-nots" (p. 50). As noted by Hamel (2006), it is "those who, from *subaltern* [emphasis added] positions and a second language status, [who] help to strengthen the dominant role of a language" (pp. 2255–2256) who can describe best the agentive status of linguistic hegemony. Perceptions towards the motivations of Korean elites in the promotion of EFL are thus fundamental to understanding local ELL dynamics. Subsequently, measurable stakeholder perceptions towards the hegemonic normalization of ELL are represented by Figure 2:

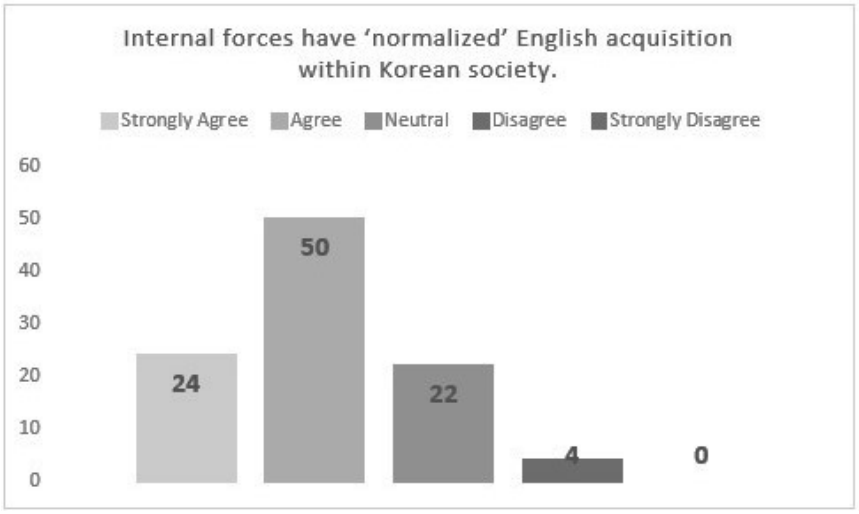

FIGURE 2. Level of Stakeholder Agreement to Statement 2.

Overall, stakeholder agreement with Statement 2 accounted for 74% of all replies, with 24% "strongly agreeing" that local forces are responsible for the normalization of ELL within Korean society. Furthermore, while 22% of responses registered neutrality towards the issue, it is worth noting that only 4% of stakeholders disagreed, with 0% "strongly disagreeing." While it is clear that a sizeable majority of stakeholders concur with this component of Linguistic Imperialism Theory, the relatively high level of nonalignment indicates, perhaps, that this is a complicated issue for a number of surveyed language learners.

By way of illustration, responses 1 and 2 of Table 4 both register their neutrality towards Statement 2, yet interpret local ELL hegemony as a reaction to globalization and external influence. Subsequently, while these responses do not quantitatively agree with the associated statement, their qualitative components align with Phillipson's (1992) Gatlung-inspired description of Centre–Periphery dynamics and thus allude to imperialism. Significant in response 1 is the specific targeting of globalization and the US as decisive influences on Korea's internalization of English, thus corroborating Phillipson's (2011) portrayal of English language hegemony as an (initially) outwardly emanating Western phenomenon.

TABLE 4. Qualitative Responses to Statement 2

Response Number	Strength of Agreement	Stakeholder Response
1.	Neutral	"Globalization and the US are now the most powerful things in society, so I think that external forces have been advocates, too."
2.	Neutral	"Neutral. I think that internal forces are influenced by external ones because the Korean Government and corporations face the global world."
3.	Agree	"Many companies want English ability due to globalization."
4.	Strongly Agree	"In the globalized world, many Korean corporations and communities need to interact with foreign people. So politicians and companies want more people who are fluent than people who aren't."
5.	Agree	"I agree. Korea's economy depends on large companies and large companies demand English ability so that they can participate in the global market."
6.	Strongly Agree	"Strongly agree. Since globalization, many corporations desire employees who speak English very well."
7.	Agree	"In Korea, if you want to be a high-class person, then you must learn English. Many corporations and politicians demand a good quality of English due to globalization."
8.	Agree	"We have to be good at English to be good citizens. I think that comes from politicians; they force us to be like that."
9.	Agree	"Korea had a hard time in the past, and it was only natural that past governments emphasized English."

Response 2, meanwhile, interprets "external forces" as influencing hegemony and thus complicit in the manipulation of local EFL adoption. Moreover, the representation of English as a vehicle for "facing" globalization reproduces Yim's (2007) symbolic description of English as a "tool for Korea to survive in the international community" (p. 37). This response notably channels East Asian Social Darwinist principles to further emphasize the impact of the ideological-reproductive function (Phillipson, 1992) on local EFL conditions. Indeed, the Western influences of globalization and international trade continue to feature significantly in stakeholder representations of ELL normalization, as represented by responses 3–7. Crucially, several accounts suggest the presence of Periphery-intrinsic hegemony by portraying globalized Korean capitalists as the primary adherents of local ELL. Nouns

including "corporations," "companies," "politicians," and "economy" are used to denote the indigenous representatives of EFL hegemony, thereby paralleling Mar-Molinero's (2006) affirmation that "the agents of imperialism, and therefore many globalization processes, are ... multinational companies, corporations, or political elites" (p. 14).

Moreover, the influence of ideology on the maintenance of English language hegemony is evidenced further by responses 7–9. English acquisition is described variously as a means of enhancing one's social class (response 7), achieving the status of a "good citizen" (response 8), and the "natural" course of action for Korea to take, given the nation's historical context (response 9). Noticeable in these reactions is an adherence to the ideological mechanisms described previously and their explicit association with "politicians" and "governments," thereby channeling hegemonic agency directly toward the Korean political establishment. Responses 2–9, therefore, correspond consistently with Song's (2011b) depiction of indigenous capitalist elites as agents of Periphery-intrinsic EFL hegemony.

Subsequently, the Korean EFL landscape may, in this instance, be interpreted as an imbalanced intracultural power dynamic, in which local elites systematically exploit ideological mechanisms to maintain English language dominance in an effort to achieve both individual and national aggrandizement. Nevertheless, while stakeholders recognize globalization as an *influence* on this process, the West is, with the possible exception of responses 1 and 2, presented as neither malicious nor consciously imperialistic. Given that Centrist manipulation of the Periphery is a fundamental component of Phillipson's English language imperialism narrative, however; it is necessary that stakeholder perceptions towards the motivations of the West be explored in greater detail.

English Language Dominance Reflects Western-Driven Imperialism

The characterization of the West as an intentionally manipulative transmitter of linguistic imperialism is unquestionably the most controversial facet of Phillipson's (1992) narrative. Specifically, Phillipson (2011) views global English as a demonstration of Anglo-American informal empire, a cultural imposition that serves to facilitate a "Western-dominated globalization agenda set by transnational

corporations ... [which, as a consequence,] provides less favorable conditions for education, democratization, cultural and linguistic diversity" (p. 452). In essence, English embodies the asymmetrical symbiosis of the Centre and Periphery, not only with regard to intercultural communication but also the domains of "economic/material systems, structures, and institutions" (Phillipson, 2008a, p. 265), a dynamic that Phillipson (2008a, p. 254) asserts "is central to ... empire 2008a, p. 254)."

As previously noted, problematic with this interpretation is the allocation of agency. Critics of Linguistic Imperialism Theory (Kirkpatrick, 2007) have routinely emphasized that English acquisition is an agentive choice made pragmatically by sovereign states and individual language learners who are influenced by a multitude of political and cultural considerations. Phillipson (2008b), however, views the separation of Centre-driven imperialism and Periphery-intrinsic determinism as a false dichotomy, contending that hegemony involves "some combination of internal motivation and external pressure" (p. 29) and that "neither imposition nor freedom is context-free" (Phillipson, 2011, p. 451). The multicausal nature of agency is, indeed, undeniable. Nevertheless, responses to Statement 2 clearly align with a number of Korean academics, including Lee (2010), Shin (2010), and Song (2011b), in recognizing local EFL hegemony as being instigated from within. Consequently, stakeholder perceptions towards the impact of Centrist forces in the transmission of EFL are represented by Figure 3.

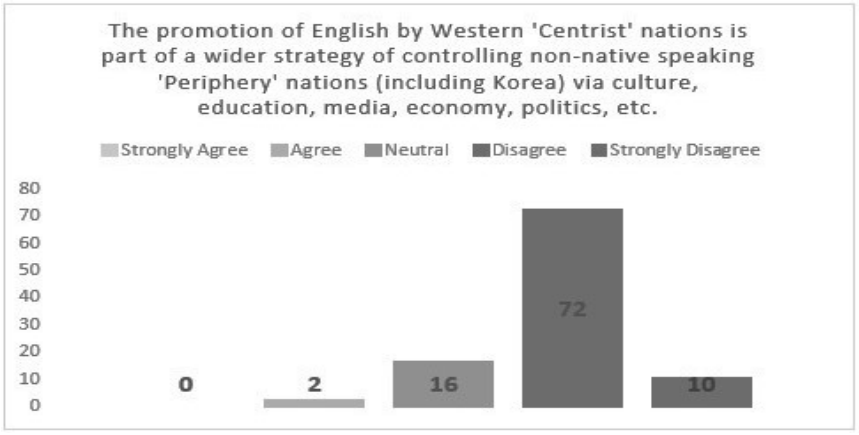

FIGURE 3. Level of Stakeholder Agreement to Statement 3.

Evidently, a substantial majority of the research group registered disagreement with this fundamental component of Linguistic Imperialism Theory. Specifically, 82% of surveyed stakeholders contradicted Phillipson's (1992) allegation that EFL is influenced inherently by a manipulative Western agenda. Moreover, while 16% of responses were non-committal, only 2% documented their agreement with Statement 3. Quantitatively, then, it is apparent that stakeholders *do not* perceive local EFL as being imposed by external agents, thereby demonstrating consistency with the conclusions of local academics (Lee, 2010; Shin, 2010; Song, 2011b). Nevertheless, responses 1–6 of Table 3 *do* recognize the influence of external forces on Korean EFL dynamics. Responses 1–4, for instance, notably describe the spread of English as a "natural" consequence of globalization. While these responses fail to characterize the Centre as consciously manipulative, proponents of Linguistic Imperialism Theory would nevertheless define these views as embodying Centre–Periphery hegemonic diffusion.

TABLE 5. Qualitative Responses to Statement 3

Response Number	Strength of Agreement	Stakeholder Response
1.	Disagree	"I think that English is just a natural effect of globalization."
2.	Strongly Disagree	"Strongly disagree. It's an outcome, not a proposal and natural because of globalization."
3.	Disagree	"No, the spread of English is natural due to globalization."
4.	Disagree	"I don't think it's about control, but English is promoted naturally because of globalization."
5.	Disagree	"A global language is good for communication. It doesn't mean that it's a Western strategy."
6.	Disagree	"Not to control, but to be more comfortable, to have a better global relationship and to experience other cultures."
7.	Neutral	"Neutral. As Koreans want to spread Korean and Korean culture via English, other countries will try to do the same."
8.	Disagree	"It could be, I guess. But they don't force Koreans to learn English. We study because it is our will and our culture."
9.	Strongly Disagree	"We learn English because our governments and corporations demand it. If they demand another language, then we will learn that instead."
10.	Disagree	"Of course this reason could affect us, but developing countries ultimately shape their own future."

Additionally, while responses 5–7 recognize the functional benefits of English acquisition – most notably with regard to communication, global interdependence, and cultural exchange – Phillipson (2011) has stated that engagement in the modern, globalized world suggests an adherence to a Western-coordinated design. Critics of this position subsequently represent "a defense of the established order, an entrenchment of existing power structures, and ultimately an acceptance of an American-dominated world order and the empire of English" (Phillipson, 2007, p. 382). Responses 5–7, however, illustrate the desire to access (not necessarily L1 English-speaking) foreign cultures and to spread their culture reciprocally via EFL. In such cases, participants employ English to achieve objectives that are not determined by the Centre; thus, theories describing Western dominance via language transmission are, in this instance, inapplicable.

Nevertheless, Phillipson (2009) has argued that the functional position "fails to integrate [language] with issues of identity and power, in effect detaching [it] from politics" (p. 110), a fallacy that, he asserts, may be resolved by adopting his combined Gatlung/Gramsci-inspired interpretation of Centre-projected hegemonic dominance. Davies (1996), however, describes the method as eminently "unfalsifiable": "[what] if the dominated ... wanted to adopt English and continue to want to keep it? RP's unfalsifiable answer must be that they don't, they can't, they've been persuaded against their better interests" (p. 488). Moreover, it is manifestly disingenuous to claim as an absolute certainty that participation in globalization and EFL results in *automatic* subservience to the "forces behind corporate empire" (Phillipson, 2014, p. 1).

Responses 8 and 9, meanwhile, continue to allocate linguistic determinism directly towards local sources. In asserting that Koreans are willing to study English due to a culturally ingrained dedication to academic pursuits, response 8 alludes to education's position as a vehicle for personal development within neo-Confucian societies (Choi, 2010). If this form of "education fever" is intrinsic to East Asian culture, then surely it must be derived from within the Periphery. Moreover, response 8 absolves Centrist agents of exerting imperialistic pressure by stating that "they [the West] don't force Koreans to learn English."

Contrast this with response 9, which describes the "demands" placed on local ELL participants by Korean "governments and corporations." The forces described in response 9 allude to Korea-centric hegemony and not Centre-projected imperialism. Thus, if Periphery elites consciously

operate linguistic hegemony, then it reinforces the position that local forces may project more agency than the West in the perpetuation of English language dominance, thereby supporting Holborow's (1999) contention that "local ruling classes come to articulate ideologies that operate in their own interests, and are not just the ventriloquists' dummies of their Western masters" (p. 78). As a consequence, the linguistic imperialism position is visibly constrained by its inability to resolve the "more specific and ethnographically sensitive accounts of actual language use" (Park & Wee, 2012, p. 16) within this context.

When considering the points raised here, the conditions surrounding post-*segyehwa* EFL policy are defined not by imposition but rather a series of deliberate and agentive choices made by a succession of local administrations. In stating that "[the] acceptance of the status of English, and its assumed neutrality, implies uncritical adherence to the dominant world *dis*order" (p. 38), Phillipson (2008b) has diminished local agency by characterizing Korean policymakers and ELL participants as powerless and passive receivers of linguistic imperialism. It is undoubtable that globalization (and, by association, the activities of the West) has *influenced* the foreign language policies of Periphery nations. Nevertheless, the Korean Government's utilitarian ELT reforms are evidence that expanding-circle settings are, in actuality, capable of making agentive decisions in the accomplishment of their own endeavors (Lee, 2010).

This notion is supported by response 10, which describes Periphery nations as masters of their respective destinies. Regardless of whether or not this perception is entirely accurate for *all* "developing countries"[5] (the world's current geopolitical environment would suggest otherwise), Korean leaders have actively sought to achieve national aggrandizement via the appropriation of English. In such a condition – and notwithstanding Phillipson's (1992) presumptuous and unfalsifiable model of Centre–Periphery hegemonic transmission – theories of linguistic imperialism may not account fully for the position of Korean ELL agency.

Conclusions and Limitations to the Research

In the era of globalization, the pervasive nature of English in Korea

has sparked a debate regarding the sociolinguistic influence of the language that continues to this day (Song, 2011b). On both the formal educational and societal levels, the nature, desirability, and impact of English are key areas of discussion, most notably facilitating an "English divide" within contemporary Korean society (Jeon, 2012). Under the banner of "linguistic imperialism," many researchers (Tollefson, 1991; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994) have sought to elaborate the spread of English globally in terms of recent or significantly reinforced structural and cultural inequalities. This investigation, in elaborating the historical and sociological development of English in Korea, has sought to satisfy Kubota (1998) and Canagarajah's (1999) demands for comprehension of questions on the significance of English that are appreciative of the tension in historical trends of accommodation and resistance within expanding-circle settings.

Considering the aim of this inquiry, it is not the intention to provide predetermined arguments in favor or against any particular position, nor does this investigation lay claim to comprehensiveness. Indeed, given the extensiveness of Phillipson's (1992, 2011) framework, the analytical depth of this study was actively constrained by limitations of space. In the perspective of Marxian post-colonial criticism, Phillipson has skillfully crafted a complex theory of "economic neoliberalism and empire superimposed onto language" (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012, p. 27), drawing much-needed attention to the struggles of Periphery language learners and the requirement for cultural preservation in the process. Subsequently, the acute influence of Linguistic Imperialism Theory on the direction and scope of sociolinguistic research has been profound, and for that, Phillipson must be commended.

Nevertheless, having traced the ideological and sociological mechanisms by which Korean capitalists have reinforced the dominance of English since the nation's structural self-insertion into contemporary transnationalism, this study has established directional causality toward Korea-intrinsic EFL hegemony. Local stakeholders, therefore, have recognized theories of linguistic imperialism as failing to account fully for the functional veracities of English language dominance within this specific setting. As a consequence, there is a risk that Phillipson's repeated assertion of Western manipulation may serve to detract from the overall validity of his comprehensive framework. Inaccurate calls of "conspiracy theory," however, undermine "the more critical problem of dealing with the social, economic, political, and cultural causes and

effects of globalization" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 80).

By way of illustration, both primary and secondary research components of this study have identified the attainment of English within Korea to have been rationalized ideologically as part of the nation's drive for internationalism. This facilitates the maintenance of regional inequality as it is already structured by limiting to wealthy Koreans "access to education, socio-economic mobility, social status, and political power" (Song, 2011b, p. 42) via the hegemonic institutionalization of the English language. Subsequently, it is determined that the individual structures of local EFL hegemony are compelled variously by societal conditions distinct to the Korean setting: namely, a firm commitment to neo-Confucian beliefs pertaining to education, social advancement, and nation-state; and a pronounced history of socio-educational inequality, represented currently by a conspicuous "English divide."

The successful resolution of this condition will be a long, arduous, and uncertain process. One thing is assured, however: if change is to be realized, then it must come from within, indexed by adjustments in forms of consciousness toward the importance of EFL in the achievement of transnational objectives and social mobility. On a final note, it must be acknowledged that this investigation is limited by its focus on a concentrated demographic of language learner: namely, high-achieving, third-year university students who are visibly invested in the English language, owing to their uniformly high level of comprehension. As a consequence, it is advisable that any future research into linguistic imperialism situated in the Korean setting broaden the demographic of its research group, perhaps exploring the attitudes of those who are perceived to have not benefited directly from ELL.

THE AUTHOR

Michael D. Smith is an EFL instructor at Kwansei Gakuin University's School of International Studies, having lectured previously at The Republic of Korea Naval Academy, Jinhae. He received his MA in applied linguistics from The University of Portsmouth and is currently enrolled at University College London's Institute of Education, where he studies technology and education. Michael's research interests include CALL, corpus linguistics, and sociolinguistics. Email: Michael.Dean.Smith@Kwansei.ac.jp

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FOOTNOTES

[1] As described by Marshall (1998), "the Centre–Periphery model is a spatial metaphor which describes and attempts to explain the structural relationship between the advanced 'Centre' and a less developed 'Periphery'" (p. 71). In this instance, the Centre denotes inner-circle English L1 nations and, in time, assimilated non-native-speaking elites; the Periphery, meanwhile, describes the majority subaltern populations of outer- and expanding-circle nations.

[2] *Linguicism* is a term analogous to discriminatory constructs including racism and sexism that describes the ideologies and structures with which sociolinguistic hierarchies are both operated and legitimated and how said hierarchies contribute to imbalanced power distribution.

[3] Created by Seoul National University's Language Education Institute in 1992, the TEPS English proficiency test is the primary method of evaluating local English language competence.

[4] The TOEIC assessment was designed by the U.S.-based Educational Testing Service at the request of Japanese businessman Yasuo Kitaoka (McCrostie, 2010).

[5] In this instance, the stakeholder's use of the term "developing countries" is, perhaps, misguided, considering that Korea, a member of the OECD with a relatively high Human Development Index score and GDP per capita, is widely viewed as "developed."